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Enclosure to
Saigon A-17

PRESIDENT THIEU'S TET MESSAGE TO THE NATION

BROADCAST AT MIDNIGHT, JANUARY 26-27, 197[illegible]

Greetings beloved compatriots, fellow fighters, cadre:

I sincerely wish you a happy Tet and a peaceful New Year filled with success.

For the past few years, right up to this sacred moment, we have been looking towards peace for the nation.

Today, I am able to say with authority that the past year was the year in which peace for the people came closer than ever before, because the remains of the invading Communist forces have been smashed by our valiant army and pushed back to the border and because our rural areas which have previously suffered from Communist destruction have been almost entirely rebuilt by you.

In the New Year, our military forces will win more glorious victories, the remnants of the invading North Vietnamese forces as well as their henchmen in the South will be hit even harder, and more of their political cadres and underground organizations will be destroyed. That is to say, the war the Communists have caused will be ended more rapidly by us.

It is the security which has been gradually restored all over the land, it is the peace and prosperity of the new rural areas brought about by our military and people, and it is the development of villages, hamlets, and neighborhoods to which our army and people have increasingly devoted their daily efforts which have brought the nation the peace which is the aspiration of the people--our peace, a realistic, stable peace, a peace guaranteeing the people's honor, the nation's independence, and guaranteeing freedom and well-being for the people, but not a peace of poverty and slavery which the Communists want to force us to accept.

Today, no one still thinks the Communists can defeat us. There is also no one who thinks we must accept a peace stipulating surrender to the Communists and handing over the nation except for a small number of cowardly, defeatist elements or underground lackeys who propagandize for them.

On the contrary, if everyone sees that with our big military victories there have been gains in security everywhere, that flourishing development progresses every day, at once in each village, hamlet, and neighborhood and everywhere in all villages, hamlets, and neighborhoods of the country, then a just and lasting peace will be restored in a few more years.

That is why if the Communists stubbornly continue the war and do not take peace talks seriously that:

---Peace will still come because the war will fade away,

---Peace will come because we are becoming stronger and stronger and the Communists, weaker and weaker.

I assert this because the Communists themselves confess they cannot win by force and therefore must return to the guerrilla warfare of the past decade which they term the protracted war of attrition.

But their guerrilla war cannot win a final decision when their main forces and big units no longer exist, and when Northern rear areas and the front lines in the South have become too weak, especially since there is no just cause and no support from the people in the South.

Although the Communists cannot win, the Communists cannot publicly acknowledge the truth of defeat by a peace treaty which would not give them any advantage permitting them to take over the South by political tricks.

Therefore, the Communists still nourish a last wish, namely for a defeatist government in the South and for a leader who does not have a firm anti-Communist stand, who is naive and easily duped by them at the conference table, or who can be surrounded by their underground lackeys and led to a surrender to the Communists by means of accepting coalition, neutrality, territorial concessions, or leaving the Communist party free to do what it pleases in the South.

Their hopes rest entirely on this year's Presidential and Lower House elections. They will use every last means and every trick to get many people of that sort into the future government. That is the shortest and easiest way to help them take over the South in a smooth but also legal manner.

For that reason, today, on the occasion of the beginning of the year, I can tell you the Year of the Pig is the decisive year for peace. Either we will have a secure peace, or we will have a peace leading to the total loss of the country and an ever-lasting life of Communist slavery for the people of Vietnam.

The peace which will decide the destiny of the country and the destiny of each of you will be decided by yourselves by the choice of leaders for the nation in the elections of August and October 1971.

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Beloved compatriots, brothers and sisters:

I have often told you that a peace followed by a concession of land to the Communists, by neutrality or coalition with them which would permit free expansion of Communist ideology in the South would be suicide.

Advocating such a peace would be betraying the nation and the people.

Such a peace solution would sooner or later cause our beloved South to fall into the hands of the Communists.

I maintain my view that a peace, even signed and guaranteed by the Communists would not be practical and stable if we were not strong enough to defend it because the Communists would never respect it.

On the contrary, a peace which we could create from a position of strength, even if we did not sign it, would be a practical and guaranteed peace because the Communists would never dare violate it and they would never be able to defeat it. With the coming of the New Year, I would like to assert to you:

---First, I am determined not to surrender to the Communists and not to betray the nation and people.

---The people can be naive, but I, responsible for leadership of the nation, cannot be naive.

---The people can be duped, but I do not have the right to dupe the people.

Therefore, I am determined to bring a practical and lasting peace to the nation, to secure independence, freedom, and well-being for the South by defeating the Communist aggressors from without and their lackeys from within. I will not accept a false peace based on risky solutions which would lead to the loss of the country and your massacre.

I pledge that we will win and the Communists will lose.

Thank you.

(This is an unofficial Embassy translation of the President's remarks as translated from the January 29 edition of Viet-Nam Press.)